



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

TO Interested Parties

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RE: Washington Voter Views of I-976

DATE October 15, 2019

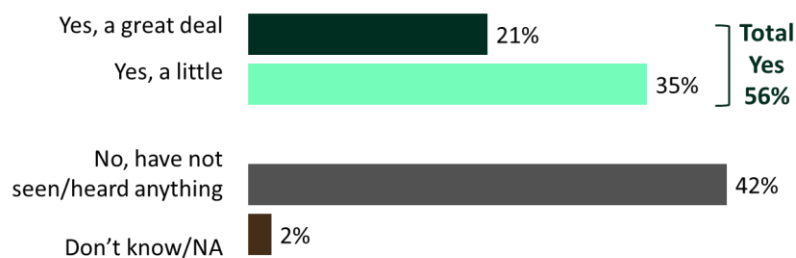
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed 604 telephone interviews with registered Washington voters likely to participate in the November 2019 election assessing their opinions of Initiative 976, which would repeal vehicle taxes and fees that fund transportation projects throughout the state.ⁱ The data show that the campaign against I-976 has had a dramatic impact - dropping support for the measure below 50% for the first time. However, the data also show the urgent need for a continued strong campaign against the measure, particularly outside the Seattle media market. A plurality of voters still favors the measure, including a majority of voters in Eastern and Southern Washington.

Key specific findings of the tracking survey follow below:

- **More than half of Washington voters now have heard, seen or read something about I-976.** Figure 1 shows that one in five (21%) have heard "a great deal" about I-976 at this point, while another one-third (35%) have heard "a little."

Figure 1: Awareness of I-976

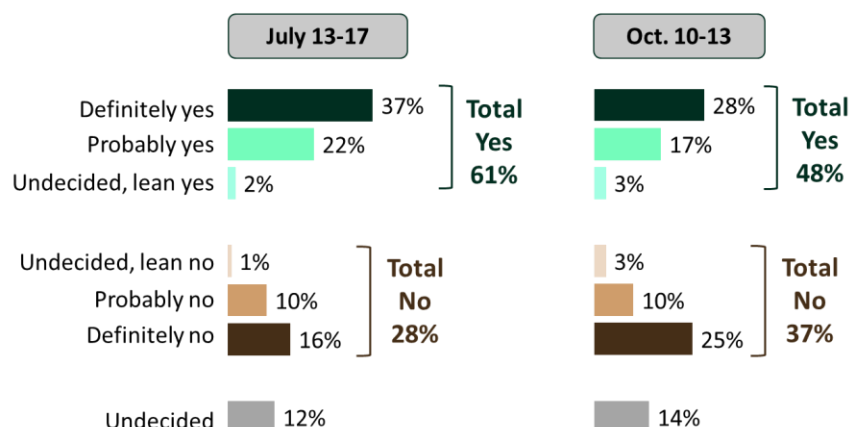
Have you seen, heard, or read anything about Initiative 976, a measure concerning motor vehicle taxes and fees that will be on the Washington ballot?



- **Support for the measure has declined markedly in the last four months.** Figure 2 on the next page shows the change in support for I-976 between July and October. In July, fully three in five (61%) supported I-976, with more than one-third saying they would "definitely" vote yes. The measure now has support from fewer than half of voters (48%), and nearly two in five (37%) are "strongly" opposed. Essentially, the margin's 33-point

margin of support has shrunk to just 11 points. Notably, among those who have heard "a great deal" about I-976, a slim majority opposes the measure -- 46% say they would vote "yes" and 50% say they would vote "no." The "no" campaign has had a clear impact.

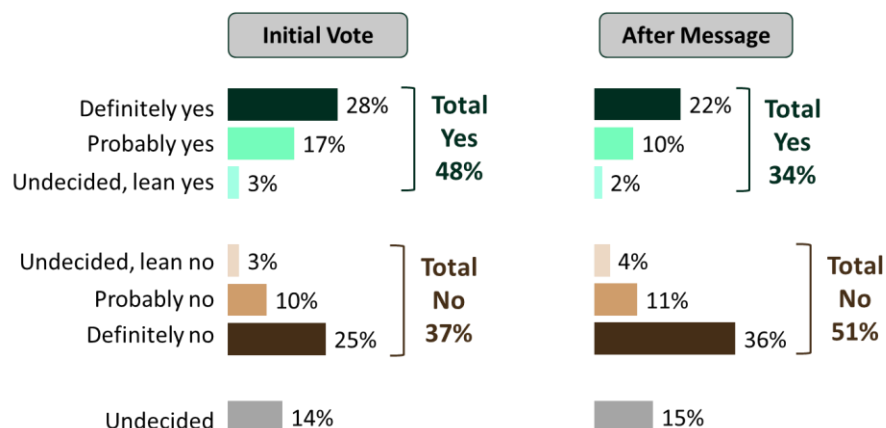
Figure 2: Change in Support for I-976



- **Given a strong argument against the measure, a majority opposes I-976.** Voters were next given a brief paragraph describing the negative impacts of I-976 and breadth of the coalition opposing it. This shifts opinions dramatically, with a majority (51%) opposed and a 17-point "no" vote margin. This data shows the strong impact a continued "no" campaign can have.

Figure 3: Shift in Vote on I-976 After Messaging

Next, here is a brief statement from opponents of I-976. This ballot measure, written by Tim Eyman, would reduce funding for state and local road and transportation improvement projects by almost \$4 billion over the next 10 years, and put seven billion dollars of Sound Transit funding at risk. Washington has more than 160 bridges and overpasses that are in "poor" condition, but 976 jeopardizes public safety by eliminating projects to fix hundreds of bridges, overpasses, and tunnels that do not meet earthquake safety standards. That's why business, labor, and environmental groups, the Washington State Troopers' Association, the Seattle Times, and Walla Walla Union Bulletin all oppose I-976.



- **The need for communications outside the Seattle media market is particularly urgent.** Voters in the Seattle market, where all campaign advertising has run to date, are now almost evenly split on I-976 - with 44% in favor and 41% opposed. In the Spokane market voters back it 57% to 24% - and more than 60% of voters support it in the balance of the state. Voters who have seen television ads oppose the measure 43% to 48%, underscoring the key importance of broadening the reach of those ads beyond western Washington.

In sum, the study shows significant movement away from support for I-976, especially among those who have been exposed to messaging about the measure. The campaign is clearly winnable, but will require continued strong communications in the weeks to come.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From Oct. 10-13, 2019, FM3 completed 604 telephone interviews (on both landlines and cell phones) with likely November 2019 voters in Washington. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.